

*Administration of Barack Obama, 2015*

**Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Fundraiser in San Francisco, California**

*June 19, 2015*

Thank you. Well, first of all, I think the Bay Area generally has been a little greedy when it comes to championships. Fortunately, the Blackhawks—[*laughter*—just had their parade, so we kind of wedged our way in between the Giants and the Warriors.

But let me just say that it is actually really impressive. The Warriors played basketball the way basketball should be played and are a class organization. I had a chance to talk to Steve Kerr, who I will eternally be fond of because he was a Bull who, receiving a pass from Michael Jordan, hit a series-winning shot. That's right. And I talked to Steph as well. Steph had come by the White House because, some of you may be aware, every time he makes a three-point shot, he makes a contribution to purchase malaria nets. And so he was doing something with the State Department, and he stopped by, and could not be a finer young man and a better representative of the sport as well as the Bay Area.

And so you guys deserve to win. [*Laughter*] This year. [*Laughter*] And I will welcome them to the White House, and I will be pleasant, and I will say nice things about them. [*Laughter*] But understand, the Bulls are coming. The Bulls are coming. [*Laughter*] White Sox. [*Laughter*] Although, Cubs, that's fine too. [*Laughter*]

I want to obviously start by thanking Tom and Kat. They are incredible friends. They are incredible community leaders, national and international leaders on issues that matter not just to America, but matter to the world. And they appear to have done an outstanding job with their children. I just had a chance to meet them, and they are all smart and good looking and well mannered. [*Laughter*] And I think that—well, Tom is denying they're well mannered. Look, the important thing is how they act outside of the house. [*Laughter*] If they put on a good show for everybody else, that's fine. And so—yes, right, happy Father's Day because you've done a good job, although I know it was mostly Kat. [*Laughter*] But I can't thank them enough for everything they've done not just to support me, but to support the issues that matter to everybody in this room.

I want to thank Nancy Pelosi. When Tom gave that list of things that we've accomplished, the fact of the matter is that none of those things would have been accomplished had it not been for an extraordinary partner in Congress, and Nancy Pelosi has been that partner, and I could not be prouder to work with her.

Nancy could not be such a good partner if it weren't for the incredible Members of Congress who constitute the Democratic Caucus. And I brought my list here because nothing is worse than you missing somebody in the acknowledgments; you will never live it down. [*Laughter*] So I'm just going to make sure that I see everybody here. First of all, we've got Barbara Lee. We love Barbara. I've got Anna Eshoo right there. Love Anna. We've got John Garamendi. Where's John? He's a big guy so he's hard to miss. There you go. The outstanding Ami Bera is here, down from Sacramento. And our a DCCC chair, Ben Ray Lujan. And I want to thank Kev Choice, who apparently is pretty talented. There you go, thank you, Kev.

So in addition to basketball, I've been thinking about a few other things. [*Laughter*] Obviously, over the last couple of days, the thing I've been thinking about most is what

happened in Charleston. I won't repeat the comments that I've been making about this issue because I suspect I'm preaching to the choir here, but in addition to heartbreak and wanting to extend love and prayer and support to the families who have been affected; in addition to marveling at the statements that those family members of those victims made today to this suspect; and for them to find the strength to be able to say, "We forgive you," an expression of faith that is unimaginable, but that reflects the goodness of the American people; in addition to all those things, I think it's important for us to acknowledge that this stuff happens way too often.

These mass shootings like this do not happen in other advanced countries around the world. They are unique, in their frequency, to America. And it's not because there aren't violent people or racist people or crazy people in other countries; it's that a 21-year-old kid can't just walk in and buy a firearm and, oftentimes, through gun shows, avoid background checks, and then act on this hatred. And we've got to change that. And it's not enough for us to express sympathy. We have to take action. And it is not going to happen in this Congress, but we have to stay on it so that it does.

And that leads me, I guess, to a broader reflection on where we are as a country. I could not be prouder of the progress that, with the help of Democrats in Congress, and most importantly, due to the resilience of the American people, the progress we've been able to accomplish over these last 6½ years. And you heard some of the statistics. Unemployment down from 10 percent to 5.5 percent. Stock market and 401(k)s recovered. The housing market back almost to normal. People regaining a sense of stability in their own finances. The deficit down by two-thirds. Close to 13 million jobs created over a 5-year stretch.

Millions of people getting coverage for the first time. But perhaps less noticed, but just as important, people who did—do have health insurance having protections they didn't have before. There was a gentleman here that I won't point out, but as we were taking a picture said: "My daughter has a congenital heart disease, 8 years old. And her life is going to be better because she can't be discriminated against because of a preexisting condition." That's also part of what we accomplished.

We have been able to increase high school graduation rates to record levels. College attendance rates to record levels. We're starting to see improvements in early—elementary school reading scores. We have doubled the production of clean energy; increased solar energy by about 10 times, by a factor of 10. We have increased wind power, tripled it, since I came into office. Doubled fuel efficiency standards on cars. I could go on.

The point is, there's almost no economic measure by which we are not better off than when I came into office. We've ended two wars. We have, by and large, been able to protect the American homeland, and we have been able to conduct operations against terrorist organizations while staying true to the law and our Constitution and our values. We've expanded protections and not just tolerance, but embraced our LGBT community in ways that might have seemed unimaginable 10 years ago. I'm really proud of this record.

And the reason I've been able to do it is, I've had partners in Congress. As difficult and frustrating as the legislative process can sometimes be, I've had people who have been willing to stand up and work with me and sometimes compromise, sometimes take half a loaf, sometimes suffer attacks from our own base as much as from the other side. We've done the right thing, and it's paid off.

But the amount of work left undone is remarkable. The challenges, but also the opportunities to continue to grow this economy so that everybody gets a shot, our ability to make sure that the next generation inherits not just a better America, but a better planet from this generation. The opportunities are there, and the challenges are significant. And there are two things in particular that these days I'm spending a lot of time thinking about.

The first is the changing nature of the economy. We were talking earlier with a smaller group, and I think Tom asked me, why is it that the country may not fully appreciate how remarkable our recovery has been compared to the historical standard after a major financial crisis? And I said, well, part of it is we've had a 20-, 30-year trend in which the middle class has seen its incomes and wages flatlined. And the ladders of upward mobility have been reduced. And so even though we have overperformed, relative to other countries and the historical standard, what we haven't yet done is reverse that trend of growing inequality, a stressed and static middle class. And until we tackle that, people aren't going to feel better. They're not going to feel a sense of optimism.

And the good news is, there are things we know can make a difference there. If we invest in early childhood education, and if we do infrastructure, and if we invest in basic science and research, and if we make sure that our trading practices with other countries are fair and are of high standards, and if we don't shy away from this new economy, but we lean into it and embrace it—because this new economy is all about knowledge and innovation, and that's who we are as Americans—if we take some basic steps, then we can give people that sense of upward mobility and optimism and opportunity. It's there. This is not a technical problem, this is a problem of political will. So that's something that I spend a lot of time thinking about.

And the second thing I spend time thinking about is climate change, because if we don't get this right, then no matter how good we do on the other stuff, we're still going to have some big problems. John Holdren, physicist and professor at Harvard, is the head of my Office of Science and Technology—OSTP. And John, every couple of days, sometimes once a week, will send out a missive from the world of science. And sometimes, he'll circulate among our staff the latest picture from the Hubble of some cluster in a galaxy, and it will evoke wonder and remind us of what Americans can do when they put their minds to it.

But a while back, I guess a couple weeks ago, he put out the new report, new information about what the climate science is telling us. And I have to say, it wasn't something I should have read right before I went to bed. [*Laughter*] Because the basic estimates were that by 2050, well within our children's lifetimes, on our current pace, the oceans go up maybe 2, maybe 3, maybe 4 feet. By 2300, which is not in our children's lifetimes—although the science is moving pretty quick—but certainly, within the lifetimes of grandchildren or great-grandchildren, it could be 10 feet, 16 feet. The magnitude of the changes that could be taking place if we don't get a handle on this are irreversible. And just like is true in our economy, where if we take some basic steps now—some of them tough, some of them common sense—we can reverse some of these trends and really make a difference, the same is true on climate.

This is not a situation as if we have to turn off the lights and go back and live in caves. This is a matter of us taking some basic steps to increase efficiency and expand clean energy production and change our grid and develop new technologies. And it's well within reach, and we still have time to do it. Part of what's sometimes, I think, a problem for those who care about this is we paint such a bleak picture that people start throwing up their hands and thinking, well, I guess there's nothing we can do about it. And it ends up being self-defeating. But the truth is, here there is something we can do.

If we can double the fuel efficiency standards of our auto fleet, then lo and behold, we can do it with our truck fleet. If Japan is 20 percent more efficient in terms of energy use in its buildings and its schools and its hospitals, well, that's existing technology; we can adapt it here. If we know that how we produce power is unsustainable, we have the tools or we'll figure out the tools to generate power in cleaner ways if the right incentives are in place.

So the good news is, is that we've actually, as Tom said, made extraordinary progress in a pretty short time with not a lot of political support. Imagine what we could do if Congress actually started moving with us, as opposed to against us. And we're not going to move the rest of the world unless we move too. The reason we were able to get movement from China on this issue is because we showed our own commitment. We showed our own cards. And the way we're going to get India invested in this is because they see us and China doing something. And the way we then get Brazil and other countries is because it starts being something that is gaining international momentum. But it always starts with us. It's frustrating sometimes that it has to start with us; it would be nice if things happened without us, but they don't.

So the bottom line is that when I talk to interns—we usually have about a 6-month program, and I take a picture at the—and I do some Q&A, and they ask me, you know, what was your favorite book, and what advice do you have? *[Laughter]* And they're spectacular, amazing young people—they really make you optimistic—from all across the country. But the most important piece of advice, I think, I give them is, don't get cynical. Don't get cynical. I tell them that if there was any time in human history where you'd want to be born and you didn't know who you were going to end up being, it would be now. Because this planet has never—the people of this planet have never been healthier, have never lived longer, have never been better educated. The world has, surprisingly enough, never been less violent, has never been more tolerant than today. What you can't do is give into this notion that nothing can change because things change all the time, and they change remarkably.

When you look at something like Charleston, it's heartbreaking. But I have told people, guard against this notion that somehow things aren't any different than they were 50 years ago, because you weren't living in Charleston, South Carolina, 50 years ago if you say that. Dr. King said, "The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice." It's true. The trend lines are good. But it bends only because people put their shoulder to the wheel and folks like Tom and Kat and Nancy Pelosi and Barbara Lee and all the Members of Congress who are here who know what we need to do, we put our shoulder against the wheel, and we make some progress.

And I guarantee you, we never make as much progress as we should. We're always falling a little bit short. We're always a little bit battered and bruised. We're always a little bit frustrated. But we make it better. And I tell these interns, you know what, better is good. Better is good. And one of the challenges of our politics today is, is that we forget that. People think if we don't get 100 percent of what we want right now, to date, without a single compromise, without having to tack north or south or east, unless we are immediately gratified, then somehow, the whole system is broken. Well, that's not true. It's just hard, because we live in a democracy, and we get in arguments.

But we can make it better. And by making it better, we add our little bit to this journey towards progress and more justice and more equality and more empathy and more compassion. And then, we leave some work for our amazing kids to do, because we wouldn't want to solve all their problems for them. *[Laughter]* But the reason we've got to start now is because on at least a couple things—on climate change and I believe on the growing trends towards

inequality—if we don't get those right now, then it may be very difficult for them to fix in the future. Some of these patterns get irreversible if we don't get them right now.

So let me just close by saying this: If we're going to make things better, then you've got to have a Congress that cares and is willing to do tough stuff. As I think some of you may have noticed, it's not like I agree with my Democratic Caucus on everything. *[Laughter]* But on 98 percent of things, they're moving in the right direction, and I know where their heart is, and I know what their values are, and I know what they care about.

We're not going to be able to do this because you get one President elected. That President has to have some help, and you've got to make sure that you are as invested in our congressional races, our Senate races, as you are in the upcoming Presidential race.

Ultimately, the most important office in a democracy is the office of citizen. And Nancy can't do it without you. I can't do it without you. My successor will not be able to do it without you. So I need you to feel the same sense of urgency. And if you do, put your shoulder to the wheel alongside all of us, then there's cause for optimism, and things are going to get better, and all this work will have been worthwhile.

Thanks very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. at the residence of Thomas F. Steyer and Kathryn A. Taylor. In his remarks, he referred to Stephen D. Kerr, coach, and W. Stephen Curry II, guard, National Basketball Association's Golden State Warriors; Michael J. Jordan, former guard, NBA's Chicago Bulls; Sam, Gus, Evi, Henry Steyer, children of Mr. Steyer and Ms. Taylor; musician Kev Choice; and Dylann S. Roof, suspected gunman in the June 17 shootings in Charleston, SC. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee fundraisers :: San Francisco, CA.

*Locations:* San Francisco, CA.

*Names:* Bera, Ami; Choice, Kev; Curry, W. Stephen, II; Eshoo, Anna G.; Garamendi, John R.; Holdren, John P.; Jordan, Michael; Kerr, Stephen D.; Lee, Barbara J.; Lujan, Ben R.; Pelosi, Nancy; Roof, Dylann S.; Steyer, Evi; Steyer, Gus; Steyer, Henry; Steyer, Sam; Steyer, Thomas F.; Taylor, Kathryn A.

*Subjects:* Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; California: Democratic Party events; California: President's visits; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : House of Representatives :: Minority leader; Democratic Party : Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Income inequality; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Early childhood education programs; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: U.S. production; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Infrastructure and grid improvements; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Climate change; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Holidays and special observances : Father's Day; Housing : Housing market :: Improvement; Law enforcement and crime : Gun control; Law enforcement and crime : Gun violence, prevention efforts; Science and

technology : Research and development; South Carolina : Charleston :: Shootings; Sports : Basketball; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; White House Office : Interns; White House Office : Science and Technology Policy, Office of.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201500443.